

NITZE PROJECT

Approved For Release 2006/03/16 : CIA-RDP78T02095R000300170002-7

21 Aug 67

Warnke to Helms short note re request for comments on McNamara statement on US conduct of the air war in North Vietnam (McNamara statement attached)

25X1 31 Aug 67

[] to Proctor memo re Nitze request for CIA analysis and judgments on current US air operations

31 Aug 67

Outline for The LOC Campaign

Sep 1967

IM, Rolling Thunder: The 1967 Campaign Against LOC's,

25X1

[] Copy 48, September 1967

OSD REVIEW COMPLETE

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31 August 1967

The LOC Campaign

I. Dimensions of the Campaign

Scope of the attack

Numbers of Targets taken-left

Costs

Relation to Total Campaign

II. Impact of the LOC Attack

a. Impact of Previous Programs on Transport Picture

b. Imports

c. Internal Traffic

d. Logistics

III. Countermeasures

a. Contingency Planning

b. DRV Reactions - Repair, Alternative Routes, Manpower, etc.

IV. Judgment on Significance of the LOC Campaign

Delivery Date - 25 September assuming Triple A-1 priority w/IAS

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31 August 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Edward Proctor

The Deputy Secretary of Defense has a prime interest in the more intensive U. S. air attacks against rail and road lines of communication to the NE and NW of Hanoi and Haiphong. Included are targets in the ChiCom border "buffer zone" and the near vicinity of Hanoi and Haiphong, such as the Doumer bridge across the Red River.

Mr. Nitze appreciates the fact that you and your associates are engaged by Secretary McNamara in producing a series of studies on the Rolling Thunder program. However, he feels a very real and present need for CIA analysis and judgements on the current U. S. air operations, and requests your consideration of a special paper for him as early as feasible.

Mr. Nitze is particularly desirous of having the CIA judgement re impact of the more intensified air attacks on North Vietnam's volume of imports, by rail and sea, and the NVN ability to distribute material received. NVN ability to pass material to the south is a major point of interest.

Please consider this a firm request in behalf of Mr. Nitze and apprise me re your receptivity.

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Frank Hand

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

21 August 1967

MEMO FOR Mr. Richard Helms

Dear Dick:

Attached is the draft statement about which Secretary McNamara called you. He would like very much to have your comments by tomorrow ^{*}evening.

** Tues.*


PAUL C. WARNKE

Attachment

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UPON REMOVAL OF ATTACHMENTS THIS
DOCUMENT BECOMES UNCLASSIFIED

Mr. Chairman, gentlemen:

I welcome this opportunity to discuss with you our conduct of the air war in North Vietnam. It is a matter of the greatest importance to me that the Congress and the people of the United States have a current and accurate picture of what we are doing in this air campaign.

In the light of the many recent public statements and speculations about the purposes and effects of our air attacks, it seems appropriate to preface this review with a re-statement of the objectives that the bombing of North Vietnamese targets was intended to serve. As I have stated many times, our primary objective was to reduce the flow and/or to increase the cost of the continued infiltration of men and supplies from North to South Vietnam. It was also anticipated that these air operations would raise the morale of the South Vietnamese people who, at the time the bombing started, were under severe military pressure. Finally, we hoped to make it clear to the North Vietnamese leadership that so long as they continued their aggression against the South they would have to pay a price in the North. The bombing of North Vietnam has always been considered a supplement to and not a substitute for an effective counter-insurgency campaign in South Vietnam.

These were our objectives when our bombing program was initiated in February of 1965. They remain our objectives today. They were and

are entirely consistent with our limited purposes in Southeast Asia. We are not fighting for territorial conquests or to destroy existing governments. We are fighting there only to assure the people of South Vietnam the freedom to choose their own political and economic institutions. Our bombing campaign has been aimed at selected targets of military significance, primarily the routes of infiltration. It has been carefully tailored to accomplish its basic objectives and thus to achieve the limited purposes toward which all our activities in Vietnam are directed.

Weighed against its stated objectives, the bombing campaign has been successful. It was initiated at a time when the South Vietnamese were in fear of a military defeat. There can be no question that the bombing raised and sustained the morale of the South Vietnamese. It should be equally clear to the North Vietnamese that they have paid and will continue to pay a high price for their continued aggression. We have also made the infiltration of men and supplies from North Vietnam to South Vietnam increasingly difficult and costly.

Complete interdiction of these supplies has never been considered possible by our military leaders. I believe that this point has been made to you by General Wheeler, General McConnell, Admiral Sharp and General Momyer. Our experience in Korea, with what was known as "OPERATION STRANGLE," demonstrated the unlikelihood that air strikes or other means could choke off the minimum amounts needed to support enemy forces. The nature of the combat in Vietnam, without established battle lines and with sporadic and relatively small-scale enemy action,

makes unnecessary any steady stream of logistical support. Moreover, it should be noted that the geography of the infiltration routes is less favorable to interdiction than was the case in Korea. There the entire neck of the peninsula was subject to naval bombardment from either side and to air strikes across its width. The routes into South Vietnam are far more complex and involve the use of the territories of adjoining countries. Under these highly unfavorable circumstances, I think that our military forces have done a superb job in making continued infiltration more difficult and expensive.

Any discussion of the bombing of North Vietnam must first address the nature of the target. North Vietnam is a land of 17,000,000 people. By no standards could it be considered an industrialized country. It is predominantly agricultural. Prior to initiation of the bombing, its significant industrial facilities could be counted on your fingers. In 1965 its monthly industrial production of pig iron was only 5,000 metric tons. At that time, coal was its principal export and North Vietnam shipped less than 100,000 tons a month. It had no real war-making industrial base and hence none which could be destroyed by bombing.

North Vietnam's ability to continue its aggression against the South thus depends upon imports of war-supporting material and their transshipment to the South. Unfortunately for the chances of effective interdiction, this simple agricultural economy has a highly diversified transportation system consisting of rails and roads and waterways and this system is now required to carry only a small volume of traffic

compared to its capacity. The North Vietnamese use barges and sampans, trucks and foot-power, and even bicycles capable of carrying 500-pound loads to move goods over this network.

Precise figures on the amount of infiltrated material required to support the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces in the South are not known. However, intelligence estimates suggest that only approximately 15 tons a day of externally supplied material other than food is required to support the VC/NVA forces in South Vietnam at about their current level of combat activity. Fifteen tons a day could be transported by only six trucks. This is the small flow of material which we are attempting to prevent from entering South Vietnam through a pipeline which has an outlet capacity of more than 200 tons per day.

From January through July, we averaged about 9,000 sorties per month over North Vietnam and 4,000 over Laos. About 75 percent of these sorties were directed against lines of communications (LOCs) and goods moving over them. Air strikes are reported to have destroyed over 4,100 vehicles, 7,400 water-craft and 1,400 pieces of RR rolling stock. In addition, we have struck approximately 1900 fixed targets in North Vietnam, including 57 bridges, 50 major rail yards, troop barracks, POL storage tanks and power plants.

NVN has been forced to divert an estimated 300,000 full-time, and at least an equal number of part-time workers, to repair the lines of communication and other targets which have been damaged. Approximately 80 thousand more are assigned to defense against air and sea bombardment. This diversion of some half million people in a society already strained

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to maintain a marginal subsistence is a severe penalty.

There can be no question that the bombing campaign has and is hurting the North Vietnamese's war-making capability. Accordingly, they are using every propaganda means to stop the bombing. Although there are some signs that war weariness is growing, these indications are accompanied by firm expressions of resolve. There is no basis to believe that any bombing campaign, short of one which had population as its target, would by itself force Ho Chi Minh's regime into submission.

I want to repeat, however, that from the military standpoint, bombing of NVN supports our combat operations in SVN. It renders more difficult and costly the efforts of the DRV to supply both their own and VC forces on the other side of the demilitarized zone. As General Wheeler has testified, we have under constant review the advisability of adding new military targets in the North and of conducting re-strikes against rail facilities, highways, bridges, military and other war-supporting targets that have previously come under our air attack. There is continuing study of ways in which our air and naval bombardment of NVN can be made more effective in disrupting and interdicting North Vietnamese attempts to support aggression against their southern neighbors.

There also is continuing study of the optimum mix of sorties, both geographically and in types of targets. Consideration is given to every possibility of greater effectiveness through shifts in emphasis. These studies are designed to maximize the cost that our air campaign inflicts on NVN's infiltration of men and supplies while at the same time reducing to the minimum the price that we must pay in the lives of American pilots.

These efforts to refine and improve our application of air power will, I am confident, continue as long as the necessity for bombing remains. It must, however, be recognized that no improvements and refinements can be expected to accomplish much more than to continue to put a high price tag on NVN's continued aggression.

To illustrate this point, I might note that the Operating Target list, currently used by the Joint Chiefs as a basis for the planning of attacks on fixed targets, contains a total of 427 targets. Of this number, the JCS do not now recommend 68 for air attack. Of the remaining 359 targets, strikes have been authorized against 302. There are only 57 recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff against which strikes have not yet been authorized. A number of these are recognized by the Chiefs as of little value to the North Vietnamese war effort (for example one is a tire plant reported to have a productive capacity of but 30 tires per day and 9 are petroleum facilities which in total equal less than 6% of North Vietnam's remaining storage capacity). The present importance of such targets has not been shown to warrant risking the loss of American lives. In the case of a few targets, the risk of direct confrontation with the Communist Chinese or the Soviet Union has thus far been deemed to outweigh the military desirability of air strikes.

Opinions obviously can differ on whether any particular target should be authorized for strike at any given time. For example, we know that MIGs are based at airfields in North Vietnam. Strikes against these fields would render them temporarily unusable for MIG operations. At

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present, however, the MIGs in North Vietnam, which number approximately 27, are giving our pilots little trouble. They tend to avoid air-to-air combat. Under these circumstances, strikes against the airfields could cost us more pilots and planes than we are likely to lose to the MIGs in air battles. Airfield damage can, of course, be repaired. MIGs destroyed can be replaced. I believe that the time to take action to render airfields inoperative is when the MIGs begin to present an important problem to us. At the present they do not.

The conclusive answer to any charge that we are inhibiting the use of our air power against targets of military significance lies in the facts. As I have noted, strikes have been authorized against 302 of the 359 targets recommended by CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs. And the total number of fixed targets struck in North Vietnam stands now at about 1900. As further targets are authorized and additional targets are found to be of military importance, this number will increase. But the decisions to authorize new targets cannot be expected to gain different objectives than those toward which our air campaign has always been directed.

Those who criticize our present bombing policy do so, in my opinion, because they believe that air attack against the North can be utilized to achieve quite different objectives. These critics appear to argue that our air power can win the war in the South either by breaking the will of the North or by cutting off the war-supporting supplies needed in the South. In essence, this approach would seek to use the air attack against the North not as a supplement to, but as a

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substitute for the arduous ground war that we and our allies are waging in the South.

It would obviously be possible for us to change our present selective bombing campaign. We could abandon the target-by-target analysis which balances the military importance of the target against its probable cost in American lives and the risk it presents of expanding the conflict to involve new combatants. Instead, our air and naval forces might be employed against North Vietnam in an all-out attempt to break their will and thus compel them to cease their support of military efforts against the Government of South Vietnam. A somewhat less drastic revision of our air campaign might be undertaken in an effort so substantially to restrict the import of war-supporting materials as to prevent the North Vietnamese leaders from supporting their present level of military effort in South Vietnam. Any such effort would obviously require action to close the three significant North Vietnamese ports of Cam Pha, Hon Gai and, most important, Haiphong.

In order to reach a reasoned conclusion on the key question of whether to abandon our present limited bombing objectives and adopt a policy intended to achieve either of these new objectives, the chances of success must be weighed against the inevitably higher risks such revision would entail. To bring this question into perspective for the Committee, I would like to deal first with the likelihood that either of these objectives could be realized through a reorientation of our air attack against NVN.

As to breaking their will, I have seen no evidence in any of the many intelligence reports that would lead me to believe that a less selective bombing campaign would change the resolve of NVN's leaders or deprive them of the support of the North Vietnamese people. As previously pointed out, the economy of NVN is agrarian and simple. Its people are accustomed to few of the modern comforts and conveniences that most of us in the Western World take for granted. They are not dependent on the continued functioning of great cities for their welfare. They can be fed at something approaching the standard to which they are accustomed without reliance on truck or rail transportation or on food processing facilities. Our air attack has rendered inoperative about 80% of the country's central electric generating capacity, but it is important to note that the PEPCO Plant in Alexandria, Virginia generates five times the power produced by all of NVN's power plants before the bombing. It appears that sufficient electricity for war-related activities and for essential services can be provided by the some 2000 diesel-driven generating sets which are in operation.

Perhaps most important of all, the people of NVN are accustomed to discipline and are no strangers to deprivation and to death. Available information indicates that, despite some war weariness, they remain willing to endure hardship and they continue to respond to the direction of the Hanoi regime. There is little reason to believe that any level of conventional air or naval action, short of nuclear attack or sustained and systematic bombing of the population centers, will

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deprive the North Vietnamese of their willingness to continue the efforts to upset and take over the Government of SVN. Indeed, the available evidence indicates that anger at the United States for the air attacks helps maintain popular support for Hanoi's war policy.

There is also nothing in the past reaction of the North Vietnamese leaders that would provide any confidence that they can be bombed to the negotiating table. Their regard for the comfort and even the lives of the people they control does not seem to be sufficiently high to lead them to bargain for settlement in order to stop a heightened level of attack.

The course of conflict on the ground in the South, rather than the scale of air attack in the North appears to be the determining factor in NVN's willingness to continue.

Accordingly, as General Wheeler has pointed out, the air campaign in the North and our military efforts in the South are not separate wars and certainly they should not be regarded as alternatives.

It could be argued that a greatly expanded and virtually unrestricted bombing effort might further our present purpose of reducing the infiltration of North Vietnamese forces and supplies into SVN, even though NVN resolve remains unshaken. Recent prisoner interrogations indicate that 20% of the personnel dispatched to the South by the rulers of NVN never reach the battle area -- about 2% are casualties caused by air attacks. Much more than 2% of the supplies sent South to support the DRV fighting forces are destroyed in transit by our armed reconnaissance

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and heavy bombing attacks. Conceivably an all-out air and naval bombardment might somewhat further increase the forces and supplies destroyed. But the capacity of the LJC's so far exceeds the minimal flow necessary to support the present level of North Vietnamese military effort in SVN that the enemy operations in the South cannot, on the basis of any reports I have seen, be stopped by air bombardment -- short, that is, of the virtual annihilation of North Vietnam and its people. As General Wheeler has observed, no one has proposed such indiscriminate bombing of populated areas.

This leaves, then, as a possible new objective of our air campaign, the closing of the sea and land importation routes in an attempt to prevent entry into NVN of the supplies needed to support the combat in the South.

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There can be no question of the fact that bombing the ports and mining the harbors, particularly at Haiphong, would interfere seriously with NVN's imports of war-supporting materials. But also unquestionable is the fact that far less than the present volume of imports would provide the essentials for continued North Vietnamese military operations against SVN. As I have mentioned, estimates of the total tonnage required start at 15 tons per day of non-food supplies. This can be doubled or tripled and still be dwarfed by North Vietnam's actual imports of about 5300 tons per day. And its capacity to import goods is substantially greater than its current imports. The ports together with the roads and railroads from China are estimated to have a capacity of about 14,000 tons a day.

At the present time, the great bulk of North Vietnamese imports enters through Haiphong, perhaps as much as ⁴⁷⁰⁰~~4500~~ out of the ⁵⁸⁰⁰~~5300~~ tons per day *during the 1st six months of 1967.* This includes most of the 75 tons of war-supporting material, such as trucks, generators and construction equipment, but probably little if any of the 340 tons of military equipment. Moreover this present heavy reliance on Haiphong reflects convenience rather than necessity. Haiphong represents the easiest and cheapest means of import. If it and the other ports were to be closed, and on the unrealistic assumption that closing the ports would eliminate all sea-borne imports, North Vietnam would remain capable of importing over 8000 tons a day. And even if, through air strikes, its road capacity, rail capacity and Red River waterway capacity could all be reduced by 50 per cent, North Vietnam could maintain roughly 75 per cent of its current imports. When we consider that the daily importation of military and war-supporting material totals only 415 tons,

it seems obvious that cutting off sea-borne imports would not prevent North Vietnam from continuing its present level of military operations in the South.

Furthermore, elimination of Haiphong and the two other ports as a source of supply would not in fact eliminate sea-borne imports. Our POL experience is an illuminating one. Our air strikes on POL facilities did destroy the in-shore POL off-loading facilities in Haiphong. However, the North Vietnamese have demonstrated a startling capability to adjust their methods, and they now off-load POL drums into lighters and barges and bring these drums ashore in the cover of night. As a result, there is no evidence of any shortage of POL and stocks on hand are estimated to equal more than 120 days consumption.

The North Vietnam seacoast runs for about 400 miles with many locations well-adapted for over-the-beach operations. The mining of Haiphong or the total destruction of the Haiphong Port facilities would leave unaffected the ability to utilize off-shore unloading of foreign shipping. Effective interdiction of this lighterage activity, even if the inevitable damage to foreign shipping were to be accepted, would only lead to total reliance on land importation through Communist China. The common border between the two countries is about 500 air miles long.

Accordingly, bombing the ports and mining the harbors cannot be looked to as an effective means of stopping the infiltration of men and supplies into SVN. A selective, carefully targeted bombing campaign, such as we are presently conducting, can be directed toward reasonable and realizable goals. This discriminating use of air power can and does render

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the infiltration of men and supplies more difficult and more costly. At the same time, it demonstrates to South and North Vietnam alike our resolve to see that aggression does not succeed. A less discriminating bombing campaign against NVN would, in my opinion, do no more. We have no reason to believe that it would break the will of the North Vietnamese people or sway the purpose of their leaders. If it does not lead to such a change of mind, bombing the North at whatever level of intensity would not avoid the necessity of proving by ground operations in the South that their aggression cannot succeed. Nor would a decision to close Haiphong, Hon Gai and Cam Pha, by whatever means, prevent the movement in and through NVN of the essentials to continue their present level of military activity in SVN.

On the other side of the equation, our resort to a less selective campaign of air attack against the North would involve risks which at present I regard as too high to accept for this dubious prospect of successful results.

For example, an intensive air campaign designed for the purpose of complete interdiction of war-supporting materials might result in a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union. A bombing of the port facilities and/or a mining of the harbors would seriously threaten Soviet shipping. Armed reconnaissance efforts in port areas, even under the existing rules, have resulted in damage to at least two Soviet ships and the death of a Soviet seaman. Mining the harbors would be an act of war requiring advance notice to third parties, who would be justified in regarding this as notice of the existence of a state of war in the international law sense.

Moreover, as I have previously noted, the complete closing of

the ports would not make impossible the movement of supplies to North Vietnam by ship. If Soviet shipping were to continue to operate, through lighterage activity, we would be presented with an even more dangerous decision. An attempt to attack the lighters and barges engaged in the off-shore unloading of foreign shipping would almost inevitably result in damage to the ships themselves. It is at least questionable that the Soviet Union would feel that it could ignore such damage or continue to content itself with strongly worded protests.

It is conceivable that the Soviets would back away from the confrontation and be content to feed supplies to North Vietnam entirely through land routes. But the capacity of these routes is entirely adequate to meet North Vietnam's needs both for its domestic economy and for its military activities in the South. So the net result of a successful closing of the ports and a total cessation of supplies to North Vietnam by foreign shipping might be only increased reliance by the North Vietnamese on rail supply from and through Communist China.

In any event, as Ambassador Thompson has pointed out, Soviet reaction to the closing of Haiphong would be strong and unpredictable. The Soviets would be compelled to resent US activities that endanger that country's shipping. This resentment would be aggravated by the complete dependence of North Vietnam upon Communist China as a consequence of this US activity. At a minimum, the Soviet Union would feel impelled to demonstrate its continued support of North Vietnam and to regain some part of its influence in that country by a major increase in its support of the North Vietnamese war effort. This increased support might take the form of

more sophisticated weapons, which could present a greater challenge to American aircraft and American installations. Soviet spokesmen would probably again begin to speak of sending "volunteers" to North Vietnam on the condition that the North Vietnamese were to ask for them. The threat to do so would become more credible in the light of US escalation and the resulting challenge to Soviet prestige. Their debacle in the Middle East will have made the Soviet leaders acutely sensitive to such challenge.

Outside Vietnam, Moscow would seek in a variety of ways to make it clear that the US action had done great harm to US-Soviet relations and had impaired the prospects for fruitful dealings between the two great powers on issues of international concern. This could be shown by a hardening of the Soviet attitude concerning moves toward settlement of problems in the Middle East. The Soviets would almost certainly pull back from a non-proliferation agreement and sharply curtail all US-Soviet contacts. The Soviets could be expected to make a vigorous attack in the UN designed to put the US in the dock as a reckless and aggressive flouter of international law and practice.

But of far greater importance, the closing of North Vietnamese ports to Soviet shipping could result in direct Soviet intervention. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have recognized that such operations may cause the Soviet Union and/or Red China to apply military pressure against us in other places of the world, such as in Korea or Western Europe. They therefore believe it essential that we also take steps to prepare to face such hostile military pressures.

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In conclusion, I would like to restate my view that the present objectives of our bombing in the North were soundly conceived and are being effectively pursued. They are consistent with our over-all purposes in Vietnam and with our efforts to confine the conflict. We are constantly exploring ways of improving our efforts to insulate South Vietnam from outside attack and support. Further refinements in our air campaign may help. I am convinced, however, that the final decision in this conflict will not come until we and our allies prove to North Vietnam she cannot win in the South. The tragic and long drawnout character of that conflict in the South makes very tempting the prospect of replacing it with some new kind of air campaign against the North. But however tempting, such an alternative seems to me completely illusory. To pursue this objective would not only be futile but would involve risks to our personnel and to our nation that I am unable to recommend.

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